

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon voted today in support of the 2008 budget conference report that creates a \$3.4 billion reserve fund for Gulf Coast hurricane recovery priorities. S. Con. Res. 21, the Federal Budget Resolution for fiscal year 2008, also allocates an additional \$1 billion in discretionary funds for ongoing Hurricane Katrina recovery and relief. Rep. Melancon had urged House leadership to include ongoing Katrina/Rita recovery needs in this year's budget blueprint, instead of relying solely on emergency supplemental appropriations as has been done in the past.

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"South Louisiana will take years to fully recover from the complete devastation caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the federal levee failures," said Rep. Melancon. **"This fiscally responsible budget plan faces the reality that we still need and deserve help from the federal government with hurricane recovery. I am grateful my leadership has recognized that rebuilding the Gulf Coast is a national priority and should be part of the annual budgeting process. Better planning will make our recovery smoother and more efficient, and I am pleased to support this budget."**

The sections of the budget conference report that pertain to Katrina/Rita recovery are as follows:

SEC. 504. SENSE OF THE HOUSE REGARDING THE ONGOING NEED TO RESPOND TO HURRICANES KATRINA AND RITA.

It is the sense of the House that:

(1) Critical needs in the Gulf Coast region should be addressed without further delay. The budget resolution creates a reserve fund that would allow for affordable housing that may be used to focus on areas devastated by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, as well as new funding for additional recovery priorities.

(2) Additional oversight and investigation is needed to ensure that recovery efforts are on track, develop legislation to reform the contracting process, and better prepare for future disasters. Those efforts should be made in close consultation with residents of affected areas. The budget resolution provides additional 2007 funding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, some of which may be used for this purpose.

The amount of the reserve fund is \$3.4 billion.

In addition to the Sense of the House language, Function 600 of the final Chairman's Mark includes \$1 billion in discretionary funds for housing and income security programs to aid Hurricane Katrina recovery and relief efforts.

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